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LAND RESOURCES: SOIL LOSS

Proposal from the delegations of Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela

Programme for the regulation and conservation of catchment areas in mountainous regions

Basis for action

Mountainous areas have environmental and ecological features that are extremely significant in terms of the existence of unique ecosystems, capacity for the generation of water resources, and a historical relationship between man and nature of incalculable value for the sustained use of the resources of these regions. In that sense the Andean catchment areas add to these characteristics exceptional and extreme biological diversity, as well as the existence of soil and water resources of high quality over a variety of temperature zones. This has resulted in a high percentage of the populations of the Andean countries being concentrated in these catchment areas, and has afforded scope for the development of a good proportion of their economic activities.

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In spite of that fact, the high population pressure, the lack of plans for the regulation of catchment areas in mountainous regions, the lack of financial resources, and also the use of inadequate foreign technologies have resulted in environmental deterioration that could have undesirable effects on the ecological balance, the economy and development of the mountainous regions and other more remote regions such as the Amazonian plains associated with the Andean blind drainages.

Objectives

The Andean countries propose a global strategy for the regulation and management of the catchment areas in mountainous regions, the main aim of which is to bring sustainable exploitation of the natural resources of the mountains into line with the objectives of economic and social development, retrieving and incorporating the relationships between man and nature that the indigenous societies have developed over the course of time.

Activities

(a) To formulate and develop a programme for the regulation and conservation of catchment areas in the Andean zones and in other mountain systems so that all the main mountain complexes may have regulation and conservation plans by the year 2000.

(b) To further the establishment and consolidation of national catchment area agencies in mountainous regions that will make possible more effective action at local levels with community participation.

(c) To create a network of institutions responsible for management of the regulation and conservation of catchment areas in mountainous regions.

(d) To contribute to the outlining and concertation of projects for the regulation and conservation of catchment areas of mountainous regions extending through more than one country.

(e) To make studies on the sustainable development of catchments and high mountain lakes.

(f) To facilitate financial cooperation and the transfer of appropriate environmental technology within and outside the network.

(g) To promote the investigation and development of alternative sources of energy as a substitute for wood.

(h) To develop programmes for the protection and study of the forests in mountainous regions.

(i) To contribute to the proper economic use of the water produced by catchment areas in mountainous regions.

(j) To concert the use of technologies for the protection and sustainable development of the mountain slopes, particularly those connected with agriculture and cattle grazing in these regions.

(k) To draft and carry out global programmes of disaster prevention in mountainous regions.

(l) To establish programmes for restocking with species of wild animals and also for re-establishment of the plant cover and reforestation in mountainous regions.

(m) To produce research programmes for erosion control in production systems in slope zones.

(n) To promote the active participation of the population in joint catchment area programmes, with particular emphasis on the role to be played by women.

(o) To stimulate ecological tourist programmes and mountain holidaying activities.